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Like it or not, townspeople in Duxbury saw much change

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — In responding to questions on a long-range planning survey a year ago, Duxbury voters said they liked the town's semirural ambiance and didn't want it to change.

But change was characteristic throughout town in 1996.

There were physical changes as the former Holy Family Church at St. George and Cedar Streets was converted into a new regional arts center, the former upper Alden School began to be transformed into a new public library and the former lower Alden School was made ready for renovation and reuse as an elementary school.

In addition, two shared septic systems were installed to help clean up Duxbury Harbor pollution — one for 11 properties at the Snug Harbor business district and the other for three houses at the Bluefish River.

And the harbor itself got a long-delayed \$2.5 million dredging by the Army Corps of Engineers.

There was change in town government, too, as five departments got new leadership.

Sharon Souza replaced Oliver "Woody" Woodruff as director of the council on aging. Richard MacDonald replaced Kevin McDonald as director of inspectional services. Richard Finnegan was selected to succeed Alan Ferguson as deputy assessor. William Harriman was named fire chief, replacing Kenneth Erickson. And

Charles Mazzone is about to take over as police chief, replacing Enrico Cappucci.

MacDonald said the estimated value of construction work for which permits were issued in 1996 will be at least \$3 million higher than the 1995 figure of \$15.9 million. His office had issued more than 1,600 permits through November, most of them for house additions or alterations.

Other events of note during the year:

- The death and funeral in mid-March of 31-year police Lt. Edmund Cuneo, who for nearly two years quietly continued to go to work despite the debilitating impact of Lou Gehrig's disease.

- The forfeiture of a season by the high school boys baseball team after a number of uniformed players looted a Sagamore convenience store on their way home from an early season game on Cape Cod.

- The removal and restoration of the Holy Family Church steeple, which was nearly blown over by hurricane-force winds in January and put back atop its bell tower in June.

- The record turnout of more than 2,000 people in August to get their blood tested for 11-year-old Brittany Lambert, who needs a lifesaving bone marrow transplant.

The new Ellison Center for the Arts will be officially opened and dedicated in February.

The new library and the restored Alden Elementary School are slated to open in September.

More change may be in the works as a bylaw review committee is about to recommend a yearlong study of local government, leading perhaps to changes in the special act that in 1987 created the town manager position.

